



Recreation and Parks Commission

Meeting Minutes

February 20, 2024 at 12:30pm

Convention Visitors Bureau • 200 S Main St, Burlington

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT:

Chair Ms. Lisa Wolff, Vice-Chair Mr. Peter Dahl, Commissioner Bill T. Lashley, Mr. David Woody, Mr. Mike Dunning, Dr. Harold Kernodle, Mr. Craig Yokeley, Ms. Elizabeth Read

ALAMANCE PARKS STAFF PRESENT:

Jamie Merchel, Director; Jason Witherspoon, Programs Superintendent; Nolan Carter, Trails and Open Space Coordinator; Anna Bowland, Grants & Communications Coordinator; Guil Johnson, Athletics Director

PUBLIC PRESENT:

Gerald Gilbert and Ed Priola

1) COMMUNICATIONS

- a) The meeting was called to order and a quorum established at 12:30 pm
- b) The January 16, 2024 meeting minutes were approved unanimously upon the motion of Peter Dahl and second of Craig Yokeley.

2) PUBLIC COMMENT

None

3) REPORT OF CHAIRMAN

None

4) REPORT OF STAFF

- a) Convention Visitor Bureau Presentation: Grace VandeVisser, Executive Director of the Alamance County Visitors Bureau, gave a presentation on updates and initiatives of the CVB:
 - New calendar software was implemented on the Visit Alamance website to populate local tourism and community events. The website is a popular resource with over 100,000 visitors to the site per year.
 - The CVB began utilizing Placer AI software last fall which shows foot traffic within the county at points of interest. It uses applications on users' phone to pull the tracking data. This data is useful for marketing purposes.
 - New for 2024 – the Alamance TDA Board will begin giving a \$1,500 scholarship to a college-bound high school senior who is studying to enter the tourism or related field. This scholarship is funded by Visit Alamance website advertising dollars from local partners.
 - The City of Burlington is building a large pickleball complex behind the current senior center. The CVB is helping to promote these new courts and is funding an economic analysis to determine the feasibility of hosting pickleball tournaments at the site.
 - The TDA completed an event center study last fall to determine the feasibility of added an event center in Alamance County. The results will be presented to the Alamance County Board of Commissioners at the March 4 meeting.
 - A new Visit Alamance guidebook will be available later this spring.



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- Burlington is putting in a bid to host the Women's PDGA Championships for 2026. This would be held at the Regulator at Cedarock Park and has strong support based off of the success of the 2023 tournament which was held at the park.
- Burlington is putting in a bid for a BMX tournament in 2025.
- A film is being recorded in Alamance County this year by Fire Drive films, which is owned by an Alamance County native.
- The CVB continues to work with outside agencies on advertising opportunities including WCHL, Chapelboro, and Our State Magazine. Additionally, the CVB works with local business groups and sponsors events such as Mebane's Dogwood Festival, hosted by the Mebane Business Association.
- The Visit Alamance social media accounts are very active and this year have featured a new face – the "Allie in Alamance" series which highlights Alamance County businesses through the lens of Labrador "Allie" and highlights pet friendly activities and businesses.
- In the upcoming year, the CVB aims to increase blogs, stories, and highlight agritourism in the area.

5) OLD BUSINESS

a) Alamance Athletics:

- Youth Football: Jason Witherspoon, Programs Superintendent, gave an update on discussions with local football clubs to make modifications to the youth football program. He presented a new participation agreement document that will be given to each club that outlines league expectations, offers reasonable guideline for the cooperative, and gives more even responsibility for clubs to pay their share of the cost of paying officials. This agreement ensures the shared responsibility of running the league between Alamance Athletics and leaders of other participating municipalities. The agreement would allow the program to scale in the future (new clubs could be easily added because they would be able expected to pay their portion of the costs). Jason confirmed that the goal is to schedule an equal amount of home games to each group.
 - Upon the motion of Peter Dahl and second of Craig Yokeley, the board voted unanimously to support the Football Participation Agreement document.
- 4-Corners Athletics Model: Jason and Athletics Director, Guil Johnson, gave an update on athletic programming plans for the department. The Department continues to explore the option of offering a "12 sports in 12 months" program plan where the focus is on expanding athletics participation to more youth and offer the opportunity to try different sports in locations close to where they live. The Department has sampled this model with the recent Sandlot Baseball, and Center Court Basketball programs. The feedback has been good on these programs and parents note that having programs consistently close to home is convenient. The board supports this concept.



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b) Haw River Trail:

- Peter Dahl gave updates on behalf of the Friends of the NC Mountains-to-Sea Trail Volunteer Trailbuilders. At the last meeting on Saturday, 2/17 there were 18 total volunteers in Saxapahaw. The group has finished the Saxapahaw section up to the Dewey Brown property and the section needs to be flagged and put on the All Trails app.
- Nolan Carter, Trail and Open Space Coordinator has spoken to the landowner about the potential of a bridge at this location to continue the trail. This has not been agreed upon, but Nolan will continue to pursue it.
- Nolan reminded the group of two upcoming Haw River Trail events:
 - Trailathlon will take place on March 23 in Glencoe. The event is co-sponsored by Haw River Canoe & Kayak. Volunteers are needed to assist with the event.
 - Camp & Clean will be held on May 18-19. This is co-sponsored by the NC Mountains-to-Sea Trail. The event will entail a paddle from AO Paddle Access to Shallow Ford Natural Area and a hike from Shallow Ford Natural Area to the Valley. The event will offer the option for participants to paddle and/or hike.
- Work is being done on new easements at the 54 Paddle Access and at Kernodle Landing near Shallow Ford Natural Area.

c) Cane Creek Mountains Natural Area:

- Phase 2 – The Tower is in progress. The Department received a private donation to help with the cost and is working with Barr Construction to schedule construction groundbreaking.
- Phase 3 – The Volunteer Trailbuilders are nearly done with the 1st loop of Phase 3.

d) Cedarock Park Playground:

- Jamie Merchel reported that old playground equipment has been removed and grading is being done at the site. The new playground equipment will be delivered and installed in March. The project is on schedule.

e) BE Jordan Renovation:

- Jamie reported that the project is under contract for lighting. The next steps are to solidify the plans for the restrooms, picnic shelter and storage building. The last portion of the project will be the field and parking improvements. This project is on schedule with the plan to complete the majority of the work when students are off site for the summer vacation.

f) Great Alamance Creek Development:

- The next meeting for the Great Alamance Creek Feasibility Study will be held next Tuesday, 2/27. After this meeting, Alta Consulting will begin to finalize the results of the study and prepare their report.



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- The Department continues to wait for Duke Energy to sign the lease to allow the development of a paddle access at Great Alamance Creek.

g) Carolina Mill:

- Nolan noted that the owner of Carolina Mill is in the process of getting quotes for the demolition of the old mill building.

6) NEW BUSINESS

a) Grant Applications for the NC Land and Water Fund for Land Acquisitions:

- Northern Alamance – Manley property (near Shallow Ford Natural Area).
Landowner Ruthie Johnson Manley is interested in selling 10.78 acres off of Leath Rd, near Shallow Ford Natural Area. The Department has prepared a NC LWF grant request for \$121,250 for the purchase of this property (pending a lease agreement with Glen Raven for access across their property to the parcel). If the property and lease are acquired, the goal would be to eventually utilize the space for mountain bike trail.
 - Upon the motion of Peter Dahl and second of Craig Yokeley, the board voted unanimously to approve the Department's NC Land and Water Fund application for the Manley property.
- Southern Alamance – Alston Quarter (near landfill)
The Alston Quarter property in Southern Alamance County is available for sale. The Department is working with the Conservation Fund to explore the opportunity to purchase this large 911-acre property for the purposes of conservation and the eventual development of mountain bike trail and connection to the Haw River Trail and NC Mountains-to-Sea Trail. The Department, in partnership with the Conservation Fund, has prepared a NC LWF grant request for \$7,090,000.
 - Upon the motion of Bill Lashley and second of David Woody, the board voted unanimously to approve the Department's NC Land and Water Fund application for the Alston Quarter project.

7) ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 2:12pm by acclamation.